

Collaboration Training

EPA Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation

Description of activity: In response to several surveys and 2005 focus group discussions of the Collaboration White Paper developed for Administrator Michael Levitt, OPEI staff coordinated development of a full day, interactive workshop focusing on key knowledge, skills and behaviors to enhance collaboration competencies of team leaders, supervisors and middle managers across the agency. "Working Together: An Introduction to Collaborative Decision Making" is designed to assist EPA managers in understanding the basics of designing and using collaborative approaches, including:

- defining collaboration and demonstrating how it fits into the range of decision-making and problem-solving faced by EPA managers
- increasing knowledge, awareness, support, and planning capabilities
- using situation assessment to identify when a formal collaboration is the best approach and likely to succeed (and when it is not)
- incorporating collaboration into EPA activities
- exploring their roles as managers
- exploring some key collaboration skills and behaviors.

The workshop begins with a unit that introduces effective collaboration within EPA's decision making context, moves on to build an understanding of collaborative processes and EPA's potential roles, takes participants through internal and external situation assessment so they can better determine when they can successfully use collaborative processes, works through key collaborative behaviors and demonstrates skills that collaborative managers should and can master. The exercises are instructive, fun and highly interactive.

The course was tested in November 2007 with 24 EPA staff and managers. Suggested changes were incorporated, and the revised course was presented January 7, 2008, at the Innovations Symposium in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to a fully engaged group of state, local government and EPA attendees who look forward to its being offered throughout EPA. The state and local representatives suggested that the courses be open to them as well as EPA personnel to further encourage good collaboration. In the Spring, EPA plans to hold a 2.5 day train-the-trainer session to certify individuals across the Agency to deliver the workshop.

In addition, to support staff and managers seeking to enhance their capacities to collaborate, OPEI is developing an Intranet site to be a clearinghouse for government sponsored collaboration related classroom and web-based coursework. The site is expected to be available early in 2008.

Internal partners: Office of General Council's Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center [CPRC] and Office of Human Resources [OHR]

Reviewers during development: Deliberative Democracy Consortium, Brandeis University, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, State University of New York – Buffalo, ORD – Narragansett Lab and DC Headquarters, CPRC, OHR, OPEI

Beta Test participants: OHR, CPRC, OPEI [National Center for Environmental Innovation, Office of Regulatory Management], Office of Air and Radiation, Office of

Pollution Prevention and Toxic Substances, Office of Research and Development, Office of Environmental Information, the CARE program, and the Office of the Administrator – Immediate staff and Office of Public Affairs